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SUCCESS STORY

Woman Mobilizes Groups on Diabetes

Visit to United States gives leader insights to promote transparency



Photo: Studio Soyuz/Dmitry Samsonenko

After participating in a USAID study tour, Svetlana Mamutova (right), president of the Diabetics Association of Kyrgyzstan, has become a prominent advocate on civil society issues.

“My experience in America provided me with new approaches and opportunities to solve many problems,” said Svetlana Mamutova, president of the Diabetics Association of Kyrgyzstan.

Participating in a study tour in the United States on the development of non-governmental organizations and the role of associations was an unforgettable and rewarding experience for one woman from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

During the program, Svetlana Mamutova, president of the Diabetics Association of Kyrgyzstan, gained a range of practical skills in coalition building and advocacy, and upon return home, used this knowledge to improve diabetic care.

Svetlana had long wanted to learn more about how community groups can influence the government, develop and implement sustainable projects, and represent the interests of diabetics. The USAID-sponsored study tour provided her an opportunity to probe these issues with the community of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and NGO associations in Boston, Massachusetts. The meetings and discussions led Svetlana to question how civil society might influence the use of resources for diabetic care.

After the study tour, Svetlana and her organization conducted research on how budgetary funds for diabetes were spent in Kyrgyzstan and concluded that this area could use considerably improved transparency. She and her team developed a plan to create a network of organizations interested in this type of work, the Coordination Alliance for Budget Transparency, and secured funding for it. Soon, the new alliance had a number of member organizations ready to tackle the issue.

The alliance, which Svetlana chairs, cooperates with state bodies and promotes budget transparency and the effective use of government resources for diabetic care. The group has already organized two regional conferences on budget transparency issues specific to providing diabetic medication. Over 130 representatives of donor organizations, international and local NGOs, and government institutions have taken part in these events.

“I think that all these changes in my life happened thanks to the [USAID] program,” she said.

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